

## Mark 4: 1-20: More... Jesus: It's A Heart Thing

### Opening:

- What is your experience at growing things? Is there a green thumb in your group? Or have you decided silk flowers and the produce section at the grocery store are great?

### Reviewing the Teaching

- Read Mark 4:1-20 aloud as a group. This passage has a lot of drama in it so let your story teller come out.
- *The theme of the sermon was: What is at the heart of the issues of the heart?*
- On Sunday morning Pastor Mel referred to four types of hearts, stubborn, shallow, closed and open. Had you ever thought about this parable that way before?
  - *Jesus uses this parable to teach us that God is planting His Word in our Hearts.*
  - *There are two colliding trajectories throughout Mark:*
    - *The religious leaders understand and oppose Jesus' claims to be the Messiah. They have stubborn hearts (Mark 3:5).*
    - *The crowd has a shallow heart. They like to feel good, but they have no "staying power."*
  - How are these "hearts" observed in the parable?
  - *The parable challenges what will happen when God's Word has a collision with my heart? Do I have an open heart or a closed heart?*
  - *Heart issues are control issues.*
    - *Jesus explains what the parable means to the disciples, not to the crowd or the religious leaders.*
    - *He warns them that they do not understand the parable.*
    - *He warns them that after they start the journey of faith there will still be heart issues and they will fail the heart test at crucial times.*
- When do you think the disciples finally understood the parable?
- Do you have control issues? It might be better to ask what control issues you have! In the sermon, Pastor Mel referred to Satan as making paradise, the garden, look as if God was holding back or not giving Adam and Eve enough. When we close our hearts to God, are we doing the same thing?
- *Pastor Mel asked us, "What keeps me from winning the battle of the heart?" Is that a good question? Do we challenge ourselves with this question often enough?*
  - *The measure of your heart is how you hear what you hear. We have an Achilles Heel; thinking that we know what's best for us and God does not.*
  - *We need to be open to the idea that there is a lie from Satan deep in our thinking patterns that needs to be explored and exposed.*

- *Life's stresses can draw me away. God wants to use stress to force our roots to grow deeper into Him. The challenge of life's stresses is that we can despair and not grow. Has that ever happened to you?*
- *Good things in life can distract me, making lesser things more important. We can be selfish. How prevalent is selfishness in our society? Does it infect the church?*

### Engaging the Message

- What is your control issue? There are places in our lives where we can easily allow God's Word to root deeply. And then there are the other places. Is there a place where you are stubborn?
- How would you know that your heart did not have a firm root in God (v. 17)? God lets pressure come into our lives to force our roots to go deeper into Him. Have you found this to be true?
- John Koesler wrote: "Failed expectation lies at the heart of every disappointment... We let our desires govern our expectations." What happens when we set goals for God? Or to put it another way, when we decide what is best for ourselves and then determine how God is going to accomplish that. Do we do that?
- What did you think of Vancouver and Toronto's Big Brothers? Who is your Big Brother?
- On Sunday morning Pastor Mel described being challenged on a hospital bed that, "Maybe God has you here right now so you can learn that to be his servant it can't be about you." Has God ever forced you to take the time to consider what kind of a heart you will have?
- An encouraging part of the message was that: God is the One Who Changes Peoples Hearts. Read the passages below and ask yourself how God will change you:
  - Psalm 119:18 – Open my eyes so I can truly see the marvelous things in your law."
  - Paul (Rom.12:2) – "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is – that it is good, pleasing, perfect."
- What would it be like to hear Jesus say to you (Mark 3:34,35): "Here are my mother and brothers and sisters! Whoever does the will of God [from the heart open to God alone] is my brother and sister and mother."
- Here is a great blog post to read: <http://deeperstill.net/2017/03/16/4-things-to-be-deeply-rooted-in/>. Type in this URL and read it if you have a moment. Lesly Shluler reminds us of four places to root our lives:
  - Deep Roots in Love of God (Eph.3:17-19)
  - Plant self in Word of God (Ps.1:2,3)
  - Plant self in Work of Christ (Col.2:6,7)
  - Plant self in Hope of Christ (Jer.17:7,8)

### PRAYER

(Consider breaking up into small groups of 3 or 4, either as couples, or as just men and just women)

- Giving up control and having an open heart is profoundly personal. As you pray tonight take time to quietly sit before God and ask Him to plant deep roots in your heart.
- Are there...
  - Specific things to pray about?
  - Specific needs to focus on?
  - A prayer focus that comes out of the message?